Grande Prairie Herald

Historical Edition

THE GHOST CITY OF LAKE SASKATOON

Thirty-five years ago on the shores of Lake Saskatoon, twelve miles west of Grande Prairie, the nucleus of what for a time appeared to be the making of an important town and trading point was laid when Cornwall and Bredin established a trading post.

As the years unfolded the new settlement grew and even after the railway had reached Grande Prairie in 1916 hopes were held for the continued growth of Lake Saskatoon city, as it was known in those days.

HoWever, when the steel began to stretch westward from Grande Prairie it missed the pioneer townsite and perforce made it necessary for the business interests and residents to move their buildings and themselves to the new townsite of Wembley.

Today but one building remains on the old townsite, that being the Memorial hall erected by the Lake Saskatoon branch of the Canadian Legion. True enough, closely there also stand two churches both of which were erected and served the pioneer citizens of Lake Saskatoon. The Anglican church was erected in 1911 largely through theefforts and work of Charles Purcell and Richard Brinkham. The old Methodist church erected under the supervision of Chas. F. Hopkins, who at that time was its minister, was completed in 1915 and is still used by the United church congregation.

In the memory of pioneers there still linger pleasant thoughts of happy times at Lake Saskatoon. The names of the

the business men of those early days as nearly as can be chronicled at this time are given below:

First to come were Cornwall & Bredin. Then came the Hudson's Bay company with Alex. Monkman, Charles Colebrook and M. Whittle. Revillon Freres had as early managers Wm. Lowe, Charlie Richardson and Herbert Mayne. The Diamond "P" Trading company with Capt. Forrest in charge was followed by Lamson & Hubbard and the Peace River Trading & Land Co., the latter with Finley Lawrence, T.P. Evans, J.B. Keith and Smithy as managers. Robert Kranz, who succeeded a Mr. Parker in the Sash and Door factory in 1911, continued that line together with building contracting until 1916 when he started a general store business. Mr. Kranz still continues his store at Wembley.

Then there were Fowler, Heddle and Ross in the blacksmith business.

The first bank was the Canadian Bank of Commerce opened by a Mr. Brodie, succeeded later by C. Cady, now with the Buffalo Lakes Lumber Co.

Bert Thompson managed the first drug store owned by the Rexall Drug company, being succeeded by Ralph Thomson.

Jim Langill was the first harnessmaker.

A hardward store was started by Gerald Evans, who sold to Bert Whittle, who later moved to Wembley and sold to G.F. Neilson.

Restaurant and rooming house keepers were Fred Blanchard, Jack Sutherland and J.E. Van Horne in the Royal; Bob Tilt and Mrs. Nash in the Empire and Charles Purcell in the Lakeview.

Liverymen of those days were Billy Kerplunk, Jack Sutherland, Doc. Wainwright and Bob Tilt.

The first poolroom was opened in 1914 when Bob Abbott freighted the tables in from Edmonton. Later Jack Blanchard and then Charles Cowpar conducted the business until the latter was burned out.

The first Dominion telegraph office was opened by John Byrne who later moved to Grande Prairie where he died. He was followed by North Coleman and then his wife took over. A.J. Rowland succeeded Mrs. Coleman. The first lineman was Charles Banford, then came Roly Harvey and Wes. Lovell who still carries on at Grande Prairie.

Today some are still carrying on in other lines of endeavor, some went overseas at their Empire's call and others have answered the last roll call.